GUIDES FOR THE
NEW HOUSING EXPORTER

SCREENING THE BUYER

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Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Comment évaluer les acheteurs éventuels, LNH 2037.

Canada

This project was funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). However, the views and recommendations expressed are the personal views and recommendations of the authors and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them. Any reliance on, or action taken on, such information is at the sole risk of the user. This book is not a substitute for professional advice.

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ISBN 0-662-26725-7

Printed in Canada
Produced by CMHC

Guide to Icons

The Tips and Warning icons are intended to draw your attention to special information

Tip

Warning

Additional Sources of Support

This guide is intended as an introduction to international licensing and franchising. It focuses on the major issues and does not go into details. For that, we have identified additional sources of information and support.

To help you find the source best suited to your immediate needs, each source has been coded to indicate what it does. Please note that some sources of support require that you be a subscriber, and others are available only to residents of that Province or Territory. If a source does more than one thing, it has been coded accordingly.

This source will provide you with *printed* or *verbal* information.

This source will help you *find, understand,* or take an *action.*

If you qualify, this source may provide you with *financial* assistance.

This source can provide you with training in the form of *seminars* or *courses.*

This icon indicates a source of support with special emphasis on the housing industry.

Please note: the sources of assistance included in this publication reflect the situation at the time it was written. Some sources may no longer be available, others may have changed the services they offer, many more may be available on the Internet.

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Introduction

This booklet is for the new housing exporter who receives an unsolicited expression of interest from an unknown foreign buyer. You may be a builder, a manufacturer of housing products or a service provider. In the middle of a busy day, someone from Russia or Japan or Jamaica calls your order department. He says his company is interested in buying a quantity of your product or service, and asks for a price quotation.

What do you do? Do you take time to deal with what may be a frivolous call, or do you ignore what could be a serious inquiry? Is there a way to deal systematically with all such unsolicited expressions of interest? This booklet will help you develop 1) a method to screen foreign inquiries, eliminate spurious or casual requests and focus on the serious ones and 2) a general approach to answering foreign inquiries quickly and appropriately, without waste of time or resources.

It suggests a three-part strategy:

- First (ideally, before the unsolicited inquiry arrives), take the time to learn about the world's export housing markets: in other words, learn about the economic, political, legal and cultural environment of as many countries and their markets as possible, and screen out undesirable markets – decide where you want to do business – and where you do not.

- Second, develop and have ready to fax to any would-be foreign buyer, a questionnaire requesting information on the country's system of export controls and requirements, and the local housing market; also ask how the buyer proposes to pay you, and for banking/business references – then verify the buyer's information with an independent source (the questionnaire gives you time to research the buyer's country and housing market, if you have not already done so, and to find what you can on the buyer's company).

- Third, if the above are positive, run a credit check on the buyer's company; if you are satisfied with all of the above, and see a viable export opportunity, send your product literature and quotation to the buyer and proceed to negotiate the sale.

Overview

Chapter 1 organizes the questions to ask to get information on the unknown country, housing market, and buyer. Chapter 2 outlines a rough screening "rule of thumb" based on the type of market as a guide to creditworthiness. The use of the Screening Questionnaire is explained. Chapter 3 shows how to prequalify the creditworthy buyer and is based on the experience of successful Canadian exporters. Chapter 4 presents a description of the process used by four successful Canadian housing exporters in dealing with an expression of interest from a foreign buyer. The guide ends with a comprehensive list of free and commercial resources.

1. Finding Market Information

This guide assumes that you have already done market surveys on one or more export target markets. To assess an unsolicited expression of interest from a market with which you are unfamiliar, use the knowledge, methods and techniques you have learned researching your target market.

You need information on the buyer's country, on the local housing market and the way your product fits into the market, on the buyer's company, and the fit of your company with the prospective buyer's.

Free and Low-cost Sources

A great deal of free or inexpensive information exists to help you. Exporting is unique in that a large group of government and private-sector groups and individuals are available to help you with professional advice for little or no compensation: these include your bank, the Export Development Corporation, DFAIT and the trade commissioners at Canada's embassies, trade and exporting associations, shipping agents, carriers and freight forwarders. For Canadian resources see CMHC's *Directory of Sources of Support for Canada's Housing Exporters*. Most of them can be reached online (see Chapter 7).

This chapter presents the kind of information you need to create a three-part Country-Industry-Buyer Profile. Resources to find the information are listed in the Chapters 6-11:

- free or low-cost databases in libraries and other sources in country-industry-buyer order, as well by geographical region;
- free resources available on the Internet; and
- commercial database vendors available online and with a table of their services organized by geographical region.

Market Information You Need

Country Information

Use the no-cost resources first. The Internet offers excellent sources of information on virtually every country in the world. Nearly all the information you need on the economy of your unsolicited buyer's country is available at no or at relatively little cost in hard copy or online (for example, start with the *CIA Factbook 1995* online).

Housing Market Information

Data on the housing industry for the more developed countries may be available at no cost as well: check the geographic online sources. For the third world and transitional economies data may be unreliable or non-existent. You will likely have to pay a commercial database vendor for information on the local housing market and niche markets. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) publications are a good start for crisp market overviews.

On the basis of the information you glean on the country and on the industry in the country under investigation, decide whether you want to proceed with assessing the buyer. Much of this information is available in open sources; but information on the creditworthiness of the buyer is not.

Buyer Information

Your bank and the EDC will give you some information on the creditworthiness of the country and the market. If your assessment of the country and the housing market there are positive, and you see a possible export opportunity, send the screening questionnaire described in Chapter 2 to the buyer. If the information in the questionnaire is satisfactory, order a credit report on the buyer from a commercial source like Dun & Bradstreet. If you are satisfied with this, proceed to make the creditworthy buyer a quotation.

A Few Key Indicators

We are not suggesting you carry out a detailed market study each time you get an unsolicited expression of interest. Rather scan the indicators – the questions you should ask outlined below – and pick out a few key indicators that will give you an immediate sense of the country and the market. A number of indicators are suggested below (for example, Gross National Product [GNP], per capita income, unemployment, for general prosperity; number of telephones or computers per capita for availability of communications and level of technology). Choose several, get to know where you can find them either in library or online sources, and compare them to Canadian levels to get a sense of where the country ranks.

Learn how to use the geographical information sources listed in Chapter 6, 7 and 8 judiciously. Screen out risky countries and markets, and focus on promising ones. Again, pick out several databases and sources with which you can become familiar, so that you can assess an unfamiliar country quickly. Do not be intimidated by the number of sources. Once you learn what to look for, screening can be done very quickly.

Study the Markets

Ideally, you should be ready for that unsolicited expression of interest before it comes. Study the world's countries. Group them geographically and by type of economy/political system (see next chapter). Read the international business pages of world-class papers like the *Globe and Mail* or the *New York Times*. If you are interested in a particular part of the world, get local business periodicals and study them thoroughly.

Subscribe to *CanadExport* from DFAIT (it is free; see Chapter 10) to see what countries other Canadian housing exporters are doing business with. Subscribe to other export and foreign investment publications. Read books on exporting. Work to become a knowledgeable and sophisticated exporter. As soon as possible, decide what parts of the world you want to deal with.

Screen Out the Negatives, Prequalify the Positives

The screening approach suggested here is simple. First, **screen marginal countries** with economic or political problems, fiscal difficulties or labour unrest. Second, collect **information to find a local housing market** that creates a good fit for your company and the marketing of your product. Then, when an unsolicited proposal arrives, you will be ready to either pre-qualify the buyer or not, depending on the research you have done.

Creating a Country, Housing Market and Buyer Profile

Country Checklist

Look for answers to the following broad topics on the target country:

- Geography and Demographics: Consider the population size, makeup, distribution; the geography and climate; and the communications network. Use these to get an idea of the technological sophistication of the market, and its transportation and distribution systems. How many telephones per capita are there? Fax machines? Computers? Are there good harbours, port facilities, roads, airports? Are there dangers from floods, earthquakes, droughts, or other natural disturbances?

- Economy/Politics and Fiscal Policy: Look at indicators of economic and political stability (income distribution); the general level of wealth; the availability of imports in general. Is the prosperity of the country dependent on one or two crops, or a few major industries? What are the present economic conditions and what is the economic outlook? What is the relative purchasing power of the population? How large is the economy (GNP)? What is its growth now and the projection for the next five years?

What is its political system: democratic or authoritarian? Highly controlled or decentralized? Any labour or social unrest? Is the government pro-business? Does it intervene in the economy? How much official corruption is there? (See Transparency International.)

What is the country's fiscal policy? Does its budget balance? How large are its foreign currency reserves? What is the current exchange rate? Is it generally strong and stable, fluctuating or weak? Is the currency fully convertible? Are there foreign exchange controls in force, how rigid are they and what delays are they likely to cause in payments? Does the country restrict hard-currency transactions? How much trade is there with Canada? How much housing trade?

You may have contacts or see advantages in an unstable market; before you commit yourself, check to see whether your bank deals in the country, and whether the Export Development Corporation will insure your transaction.

- **Business, Society and Culture:** Is the country an established industrial society, an emerging market, or a developing country? What is the reputation of the business integrity of the buyer's country? How do business people there do business – are they businesslike or impulsive? What are the language, customs, and culture of the country? Are you familiar with them? If you are, and especially if you (or someone in your company) speak the language, you have an immense advantage. Are English or French widely spoken? This would overcome the language disadvantage.

- **Legal Environment:** Do the commercial laws governing sales contract, the rights of creditors and debtors, bankruptcy, negotiable instruments, etc., adequately protect my company? Has the country ever declared moratoriums and suspensions of payments to foreign creditors? Are there any peculiar legal or administrative requirements with regard to documentation or customs procedures?

What legal standards (technical specs) do your housing products have to meet to qualify for import by the country? What tariff/non-tariff barriers do your products face? Your buyer has to obey the import laws, policies and procedures of the country, as you have to abide by Canadian and provincial law. What local business laws affect the importation of your products?

Even more important, what is the country's general legal environment in relation to foreign business? Is it a "trading nation" with few restrictions on trade, or a highly controlled one? What trading bloc restrictions (European Union, Association of South East Asian Nations) apply?

- **Canadian Government Export Controls:** In general, these do not apply to housing products, but if you produce high-tech products that could be adapted for military use, they are restricted if they appear on the Canada Tariff Regulations Export Control List. The goods may not be exported to countries named on the Area Control List. An example of a housing product that might be restricted is a powerful central computer to regulate the HVAC systems of a building to be built in Libya. An export permit could be denied (check with DFAIT).

Housing Market Checklist

- Market Size: How large is the residential housing market and especially the market for your housing product or service? How has it developed over the last five years? How fast has it grown? What has fueled its growth? Country statistics outside the 28-member Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) can be unreliable or non-existent. You are looking for past, current and future projections of market volume and per capita consumption by the government and trade organizations.

Try to get a sense of why your segment of the market has grown as it has. Has the disposable income of the population increased? Is there a desire for imported housing products? What kind of housing do people like and live in?

- The Housing Industry and Your Competition: What you have to find out is the structure of both the residential housing market and your particular segment or niche market. Who are your local and foreign competitors, including other Canadian companies? Is the market crowded? Who is the leader (largest share)? What barriers are there to your entry? Some could involve residential housing preferences: do people know the advantages of Canadian wood frame construction? Or government regulations could be a problem: What user fees, certification standards and requirements, import barriers, local requirement legislation, and technical regulations does your product face in this market?

- The Marketing Infrastructure: Is there a sales and distribution network for your product in this country? Are there firms to do market research, public relations, or advertising? They are usually available in developed countries with up-to-date telecommunications and media like newspapers, magazines, TV and radio. In general, this type of market can support the importation of Canadian housing products, especially if the exchange rate is favourable.

Markets without a strong marketing infrastructure, like the underdeveloped markets in the third world, would likely be more interested in development bank-financed imports of industrial construction projects requiring the services of engineering consultants and construction contractors. For more on these, see the CMHC guide *IFI Procurement*.

Unknown Buyer Checklist

The essential questions on the buyer are: Is this company capable and likely to pay? Does it have the capacity and infrastructure to deliver my product to its customers? Is my product the right one for this company and its customers?

In addition, you should get some basic corporate and credit information, including:

- the name of its parent company;
- whether it is part of a group of companies;
- length of time it has been in business;
- the size of its operations and the amount of importing it does;
- the type of corporation it is: individual, partnership, limited liability, etc.;
- an assessment of its financial strength;
- its credit rating;
- an assessment of its ability to pay;
- the name of its bank, accountant, auditor; and
- the buyer's reputation within its trade. Get references.

A Note on Corruption

International business has always had to face the fact of the involvement of corrupt officials, business people, and outright criminals in export-import business dealings in many countries. No country is exempt from corruption, although clearly some are more affected than others. The exporter cannot afford to ignore this reality. Therefore, the Canadian business person should be clear about this: in dealing with another country, you are expected to conduct your affairs as if you were doing business in Canada. All Canadian laws regulating business at home apply in doing business abroad.

Check the country's current "corruption index" status with Transparency International. If it is one of the "ten worst," you would have a compelling reason to screen the country from further consideration at once.

Remember that at home or abroad, you operate under Canadian federal and provincial laws. Avoid business practices that contravene those laws or even appear to contravene your business ethics.

Local Business Culture and Gifts

Local business culture often involves the giving – and indeed the exchange of – gifts at business meetings. This is not corruption: this is simply good business. It creates trust and goodwill that will result in future sales. Learn the right way to do business by "doing as the Romans do" in the country in which you want to do business – by learning the business culture, its rituals, the exchange of cards, the exchange of gifts.

Transparency International (TI)

A new organization has emerged to track and work to reduce official corruption around the globe. Established in Berlin in 1994 by Tobias Eigen, a former senior official at the World Bank, Transparency International is a non-profit international organization that, among other things, publishes a newsletter on the efforts of various countries and organizations to combat government-business corruption. TI also ranks countries by perceived level of corruption in what it calls the Corruption Perception Index. It lists 54 countries (as of August 1996), with more added as TI expands its network of business interviewees. The Index is based on surveys of international business executives.

Make sure you understand precisely what the rankings are telling you about the country in which you have an interest. Corroborate this information with other sources. To contact TI, you can telephone the Executive Director, Tobias Eigen at: +49-30-803-5484 or access the TI Websites at:

http://www.transparency.de
http://www.is.in-berlin.de/service/ti.html

2. Initial Response: Screening

As we noted in Chapter 1, you do not have to do a detailed market study each time you get an unsolicited expression of interest. Instead, send the Screening Questionnaire to the buyer (see below), and do some quick research on the country and the market. Pick a few key indicators from those listed in Chapter 1 and scan the country and market information sources listed in the Chapter 6, 7 and 8. Screen out risky countries and markets, and focus on promising ones. Once you learn what to look for, screening can be done quickly.

As we also noted in Chapter 1, you should spend some time studying exporting. You could even take a course. Or, you could read the international business section of your paper over a period of time. Papers tend to focus on negative news, so countries and regions of the world in trouble are often featured. Learn which ones are in trouble economically and politically, and why. Learn the political and commercial risks, and either avoid those countries or insure the deal with the EDC.

Screen Out Risky Countries and Markets

There are 185 UN member countries. Some strong economies are near-countries but not in the UN, like Taiwan and Hong Kong. Group them by type of economy. CMHC's *National Strategic Framework for Canada's Housing Exporters* groups them into four types:

- **Traditional:** like the United States, Japan and Western European countries. These countries are members of the 28-country Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), with well-developed domestic housing industries and potentially a large capacity for imports of Canadian housing products. *These are the most creditworthy markets for Canadian housing exporters.* It is no coincidence that three of the four case studies in Chapter 4 export to Japan. Indicators are nearly all positive: large populations, wealth (high Gross National Product [GNP], high incomes), good communications, sophisticated technology; stable politics, pro-business outlook, Western-style governments, strong currencies, little government corruption.

- **Emerging:** includes about 20 countries in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, as well as Mexico and South Africa. Some of these are very wealthy (Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea; Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates); some have huge populations and territories, with rapidly expanding economies (China, India, Brazil); many have poor communications and infrastructure; most have immense housing needs. However, Canadian housing exporters face huge cultural differences and a variety of political systems, which if stable, are authoritarian (or if approaching democracy, tend to be unstable); their currencies are convertible and range from strong (Singapore) to unstable (Mexico); they have huge and often corrupt bureaucracies, legal environments devoid of

due process, a variety of needs in housing, and huge wealth disparities. *There are good opportunities here nevertheless*, especially for ethno-Canadian housing entrepreneurs. Approach this type of market with interest but with caution.

- **Transitional**: comprises the thirty or so countries and regions of the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. Use caution with any buyer from this type of market. There are some with relatively strong economies: take one indicator – **income per capita**, from the *World Bank Development Report 1995*, or the *United Nations Statistical Yearbook 1995*. Income levels for Estonia (one of the three Baltics), and Slovenia (the westernmost of the former Yugoslav republics) are approximately $8,000 US per year, as compared to $2,000 – $3,000 for the others, with Albania, Georgia and Tadjikistan much worse. Their geographical location is also important: Estonia and Slovenia are close to Western markets, as are the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, countries which have done much better than others in the region, and in fact have now (1996) joined the OECD.

Even so, income per capita in these countries ranges from one-twentieth to one-quarter of Western levels. For the most part, governments and laws are anti-business and authoritarian, bureaucracies corrupt, communications poor to sub-standard, banking primitive (usually cash), economic conditions difficult to catastrophic. Opportunities in these countries for Canadian housing exporters are few even though there is immense need for housing. There is a distrust of Canadian Wood Frame Construction – that will require joint venturing, training and demonstration to overcome. Yet in one of our case studies, a Canadian architect successfully exported his services to Russia. NB: You need Export Development Corporation insurance facilities for export transactions in these markets.

- **Underdeveloped**: the over 100 countries in Africa, South, Central America and the Caribbean, and Asia that are recipients of Western foreign aid. Buyers from these countries may be genuine – for example, a developer in Barbados could call you up with a genuine order for cedar shakes or shingles for a hotel development he's building; but a change in government could cancel the deal. *Use extreme caution*, check with the EDC, and look at the Corruption Index list of Transparency International. Buyers from these countries are usually government agencies with external aid financing. Individual buyers should be avoided.

To summarize: screen first, then pre-qualify. Recalling the steps in Chapter 1:

- *Eliminate from consideration marginal markets* with economic or political problems, fiscal difficulties or labour unrest;
- *Look for a local housing market that is a good fit* for your company and the marketing of your product; and
- *Pre-qualify creditworthy buyers on the basis of the research* you have done.

The Screening Questionnaire

To find out whether you should spend time on what may not be a serious offer, you need information on the buyer's company. Try the simplest approach: ask the buyer for information. Prepare a questionnaire and have it ready to send whenever you get an unsolicited expression of interest from a foreign buyer. If the foreign buyer gives you the information you need, and you verify its truthfulness from an independent source, it could help you decide how to respond to the expression of interest; so send the buyer your "Screening Questionnaire" as soon as possible after you receive the unsolicited expression of interest.

Do not send a price list or a Quotation. *The purpose of the Screening Questionnaire is simply to see whether there is a fit between you and your prospective foreign buyer's company.*

Only when you know how the sale will be financed should you start to determine how to price your housing goods or services for the buyer's country (for more on financing, see CMHC's guide on *Documenting Export Financing*).

Prepare Your Own

This guide cannot write your Screening Questionnaire – one that deals with the particulars of your company and product. You have to do that. Your questionnaire (see a proposed version below) should attempt to demonstrate the seriousness of the buyer's expression of interest by eliciting answers about his willingness to share the costs of the export, like taxes and certification; and even more important, by requesting basic information about the buyer's company or group of companies, their size, ability to pay, and willingness to provide information about themselves as *bona fide* buyers.

It should consist largely of "yes" and "no" answers, in simple English, because the buyer's English may be weak. It should center on the country's trade and fiscal policies to give the buyer an idea of what concerns you – getting paid – and a sense of some of your requirements in any eventual sale (an irrevocable letter of credit, for example). Key questions are the name of the unknown buyer's **bank** and the **references**.

Screening Questionnaire Checklist

There are countries with which you do not want to deal at all. Here are six points to consider in trying to decide about the desirability of doing business with the unknown buyer and the country involved:

- Where does the prospective buyer's country rank on the corruption list of Transparency International (see Chapter 1)? (But do not rely on only one source of information – try to corroborate it from another source.) If the country is on the TI list of "ten worst" you may want to consider whether you want to answer at all. If your preliminary information is completely negative, and you confirm it from other sources, have a standard faxed response indicating that you decline, with thanks, because you are too busy to meet this additional demand.

- Is the country creditworthy? Does it have foreign exchange controls? In particular, does it have laws requiring that the import (from your company) be in the national interest of that country, or that contracts with foreigners must be subject to domestic laws if they are to be enforceable in the domestic courts?

- Verify information you receive from the filled out Screening Questionnaire. Consider sending a copy of the Screening Questionnaire to the country's Canadian Trade Commissioner to check the would-be buyer's creditworthiness as well as the answers he supplies you with.

N.B.: At the same time, be aware that CTCs deal with many Canadian exporters, and your confidentiality may inadvertently be compromised. Until you have a signed contract you may not want to disclose the identity of your buyer.

- Are you allowed to export to the country? Countries like North Korea, Libya, or Iraq are under UN sanctions. Check the Area Control List and the Export Control List, with the Trade Development Divisions of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, or ask the Trade Commissioner in the country.

- Consider the possibility of piracy or theft of design if your prospective buyer proves to be a small to mid-sized company buying a small order from you. Small companies usually do not deal with foreign suppliers. Why are they buying? There are two possibilities:

  1. they could be buying a small order to test your company's ability to supply, as a prelude to a large order; or
  2. they could be acting as a front for a large company, making a small purchase so that the larger company can copy and "pirate" the design of your product: with today's computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) technology, building state-of-the-art thermal windows from a pirated Canadian design, for example, is certainly feasible.

- Consider the "terms of trade" between the two countries – that is, the relative weakness or strength of the two currencies, and the effect that has on any prospective export deal. The rate of exchange and its relative stability over time will give you an idea of the opportunities inherent in the country's exchange rate, as well as the risks – because a country with a weak currency will often have restrictive foreign exchange controls, limits on hard currency exports and other restrictions on business. Government will also tend to be more intrusive and generally more corrupt.

Questionnaire

Response to Expression of Interest (Screening Questionnaire)

We acknowledge, with thanks, your Expression of Interest of (date)_____.
We would appreciate it if you would fill out and return the attached form by (**a date three days later**) so that we can proceed to the next step.

1. *Is your domestic currency freely convertible?*	*yes*	*no*
2. *Can you pay in Canadian or U.S. dollars?*	*yes*	*no*
3. *Does your country have foreign exchange controls, so that you need a permit to get foreign exchange to pay for our product?*	*yes*	*no*
If yes, do you have the foreign exchange permit you need?	*yes*	*no*
4. *How long will it take you to get the permit?*		
days _____ *weeks* _____		
5. *In your country do you need to get a permit to import our product?*	*yes*	*no*
If yes, do you have the import permit you need?	*yes*	*no*
6. *Does your country have import controls?*	*yes*	*no*
7. *Do they apply to the import of our product or service?*	*yes*	*no*
8. *Does your country have import tariffs or sales taxes on our product?*	*yes*	*no*
How much (percentage)? _____		
Do you collect and pay these taxes?	*yes*	*no*
9. *Do you use the metric system of measurement?*	*yes*	*no*
*If not, which system do you use?*_____.		
10. *Do we need to provide a Certificate of Origin for your government?*	*yes*	*no*
11. *Are there National Standards?*	*yes*	*no*
Specify the sizes. _____		
12. *Is there a government agency that makes sure goods comply with the national standards?*	*yes*	*no*
*If yes, please state here*_____.		
13. *Is Canadian Standards Association (CSA) certification acceptable, instead of domestic certification?*	*yes*	*no*
14. *What is your standard voltage/frequency (for electrical products)?*	*volt*	*freq*
Is it AC or DC?	*AC*	*DC*

Questionnaire (continued)

15. *Does your country require certification of [here state equipment] by the domestic authority?* yes no

16. *Will you be responsible for obtaining this certification?* yes no

17. *Would you take on the costs for this certification?* yes no

18. *What is the name of your bank?* _____.

19. *Please give the names, addresses, phone and fax numbers of three trade references.*
_____
_____
_____

20. *What is the name of your parent company?* _____

21. *Are you a member of a group of companies?* _____

22. *Please specify and describe characteristics of relationship.*

23. *Can you pay for this order with an irrevocable letter of credit?* yes no

24. *Will you accept shipping FOB our factory (Ex Works)?* yes no

25. *Do you have agreements in place with freight forwarders?* yes no

Consent: I, (buyer) _____, on behalf of (Buyer's Company) _____
consent to the disclosure of information about said company to (you and your company) _____ in Canada for the purposes of this transaction.

_____ Signed (Buyer)

3. Follow-up Response: Prequalifying

React to the Responses of the Buyer

Your buyer may be genuine; he may be simply checking you out casually for future reference; he may be too small a company to buy from a Canadian supplier; or he may have some unacceptable ends that you know nothing about. The Screening Questionnaire is designed to provide you with information on how to proceed next. Now you are ready to prequalify the creditworthy buyer.

Give the buyer a few days (up to a week) to answer your questionnaire. Use the time to find out all you can about the country, the housing market, and if possible about the buyer, from the free or inexpensive sources.

- If the buyer ignores your request, all you have lost is the fax time of sending a two-page message;
- If the buyer returns the Screening Questionnaire complete, check the answers thoroughly. Thank him in a covering letter, and ask him for more specific information on his own company – unless you have already included it in your questionnaire (What type of company is the buyer – a builder, developer or importer? What type of housing product does the company deal with? Where is it based? What market does it work in? and, How large an order is required?). Send your company brochure and a full set of product sheets; at the same time, check his information with your bank, the Trade Commissioner, or some other independent source;
- If the buyer calls for "clarification" of some of the questions, seems reluctant to reveal information about himself, etc., explain that before you go on to do business, you need the information in the questionnaire, and that you will hold all information in strict confidence;
- For certain markets, or depending on the circumstances, you could decide to send your company brochure and product sheets **with** the Screening Questionnaire.

Send Your Company Brochure and Detailed Product Sheets

Once you have received the questionnaire back and decided to go on to the next stage, send full information on your company and your product line – the company brochure and product sheets. Your company brochure should describe clearly who you are and what you do, including age, number of employees, management, and full information on the relevant product line, including export-related information (how the product is packed and labelled,

etc.). Your product sheets should offer only a few select choices, and about five colours in each product type, for example. Limit the number of choices for export: the more choices you offer, the longer it will take for the buyer to decide (see Chapter 4, case study 1).

Ideally, this information is for both the buyer and the buyer's customers, so it should be in their language. Because this order was unsolicited, however, you can send the buyer your literature in English or French, depending on which is more appropriate, or both.

Do provide the brochure and product sheets in the language of the prospective buyer, if available. Sometimes repeated callbacks are caused by language problems.

Order a Credit Report

When you are satisfied with the basic information on the buyer and are convinced that there is a fit between the product or service you offer and what the buyer requires, *order a credit report by Dun & Bradstreet*, or some other international credit agency. In particular, look at the type of company you are dealing with (limited liability, limited partnership, incorporated firm, etc.) and its size in relation to the prospective order (should be scaled to the size of the company); etc.

If Positive, Send a Quotation, Negotiate Contract

Your Quotation price should include any additional export costs, like labelling, shipping, insurance, etc. As noted above, the Screening Questionnaire should not be accompanied by a Quotation. It should give no price list. When you are completely satisfied with every aspect of the country and housing market research, as well as the credit report and buyer company information – that is the time to send the Quotation.

If your Quotation is accepted, and you are sure you know how the buyer will finance the sale, you can proceed to draw up the contract. If you are not sure of how the buyer plans to pay, and an EDC guarantee is necessary, sign the contract when payment details have been completely settled (on the EDC, see CMHC's guide on *Documenting Export Financing*). Have the contract drawn up by your export lawyer; he or she will include the necessary clauses in Appendix A (Legal Clauses): have them approved by your buyer and sign. Then continue with the procedures outlined in Appendix A (Quotation to Carrying Out Terms of the Contract).

4. Case Studies

These case study outlines are provided as examples of how successful Canadian housing exporters respond to an expression of interest. All but one of our interviewees export to a developed country (Japan).

We interviewed two home builders, a manufacturer and supplier of finished housing materials and a housing service provider (architect) who exported his services to a transitional economy (Russia). While the architect's case study (no. 4) does not illustrate a detailed screening study, it is both representative of an important part of the housing industry, the service providers, and a demonstration of how screening can be achieved in an otherwise difficult market, when two business people establish a strong personal bond of trust.

Case Study No. 1: Major exporter of prefab homes to Japan

1. When we receive an expression of interest, we return a response that clearly outlines who we are and what we do. Our product checklist offers simple selections - e.g., Standard, Upgrade 1, Upgrade 2, and only 5 to 6 colours in each of our product types. We have learned that the more choices we offer, the longer it takes for the buyer to decide.

Our initial response is bilingual. We have learned that when we have relied on the English of our prospective buyer, we have had a more difficult process. As well, if the expression of interest does not make clear the particulars of the prospective buyer, this first response also asks about the kind of company it is. For example, we want to know

- whether the company is a builder, a developer, an importer;
- the type of housing product it deals in;
- where it is based, in what market it is working; and
- the number of units required.

The purpose of this first response is to set the record straight and to avoid time-consuming, back-and-forth exchanges between us and the seller over every minor point. We believe it is better to take the time to answer most of the buyer's questions in detail at this early stage.

2. When we are satisfied with the basic information we have on the buyer's order and are satisfied that we have a fit between what we offer and what the buyer wants, we order a Dun & Bradstreet credit report. We look at the type of company it is (limited liability, limited partnership, incorporated or not, etc.), its size in relation to what it wants to order from us (the scale and scope of requirement need to be in reasonable proportion to the size of the company); etc.

3. When we are completely satisfied with every aspect of the creditworthiness report, we send the buyer a firm quotation. Since we pack the containers, our prices reflect a container packing and loading fee.

All of our packaging and labelling is bilingual. All of our measurements are metric. Our intention is to make the delivery and the use of our products on the building site hassle-free.

4. When we have a signed, sealed contract, prior to production, we request an initial deposit by wire transfer. At the same time, our buyer opens an irrevocable letter of credit (L/C) at their bank. Then we instruct our bank to confirm the buyer's L/C.

5. From this point on, it is a matter of meeting our obligations under the contract. We know at this point that price and quality are a given. What now becomes critical to the success of the completion of our obligations under the contract is the reliability of our supply and delivery. Again, we ensure that packaging and labelling is bilingual, that the packing will withstand overseas shipping to arrive undamaged, and we coordinate all aspects of the packing and shipping of the products with the freight forwarders.

6. All of our shipments are Free On Board (FOB) our factory. This means that the buyer takes responsibility for all shipping once the product is loaded at our plant. We immediately send the Bill of Lading to our bank for release of the balance of the L/C. Our bank works with the foreign bank to ensure prompt payment.

7. One final note: as we established our export connection, we found it helpful to meet with our Japanese clients before a shipment. We have invited them to Canada several times and found them very interested in visiting our offices and touring our plants. They do so at their own expense; we just help out with the local arrangements when asked to do so, and take them out for dinner. We have found these meetings mutually beneficial. Our confidence in each other has increased and our business relationship has become even stronger as a result of these meetings.

Case Study No. 2: Builder of 2 x 4 and other houses exporting to Japan

1. We receive an expression of interest from a prospective Japanese buyer.

2. Immediately, we send a company and product brochure, including a Quotation form, in English and Japanese, by fax, to the prospective buyer.

3. The buyer selects desired product(s) from the Quotation form included in the company brochure and product literature package.

4. In a series of communications, we "build the house on paper" with the buyer, including finishes and all components to be supplied by us.

5. After both of us have signed off on the Quotation, we prepare an International Contract which corresponds exactly to the specifications, selections, quantities, etc. detailed in the Quotation, and agreed to by both our company and the buyer's.

6. Buyer signs the Contract, opens an irrevocable letter of credit (L/C) at his own bank and sends an initial deposit to our bank in Canada.

7. We advise our bank to confirm L/C from the buyer's bank (in Japan).

8. Upon receiving the deposit, we begin production and contact the buyer's freight forwarder and container supplier.

9. The buyer makes all the necessary international shipping and container arrangements.

10. Once production is completed, we pack the products securely in containers so as to ensure they will be received by the shipper in good condition.

11. The buyer deals with the customs broker who also insures the buyer's L/C.

13. We submit the Bill of Lading at the appropriate date to our own bank.

14. Our bank processes payment in full of our draft against the buyer's L/C.

Case Study No. 3: Procedure used by exporter who works with manufacturers to supply lumber and finished materials to foreign builders and developers

1. A foreign builder calls expressing interest in our product line.
2. We send the foreign builder a comprehensive company profile and product information.
3. The foreign builder submits plans and/or materials list, indicating required quantities, specifications, standards, etc.
4. We prepare a quotation based on the foreign builder's plans/list with shipping date(s) indicated.
5. The foreign builder makes revisions to the quotation or signs it off.
6. The foreign builder opens an irrevocable letter of credit (L/C) at his own bank and sends a copy to us.
7. We place our order(s) with our suppliers.
8. Shipment begins within four to five weeks. We deal directly with some five or six ocean shipping lines.
9. We submit the Bill(s) of Lading to the bank holding the L/C.
10. The bank releases payment in full against the L/C.

Case Study No. 4: Architect exporting services to Russia

1. An invitation to supply architectural services to a foreign company, or individual, usually is the result of direct personal contact between the parties, or through an intermediary, such as a government agency or trade company already in the foreign country. In my case, I was introduced to my prospective client, a Russian builder from Moscow, by being involved in a management training exchange program sponsored by the Russian and Canadian governments.

2. The Russian builder wanted to know more about the Canadian home-building industry, and specifically came to Canada to see our world-famous wood frame technology. I specialize in residential design and through my industry contacts was able to introduce him to leaders in their respective fields of housing. Over the course of eight weeks, the builder met with architects, builders, a lawyer, a real estate agent, developers, manufacturers, educators and government officials. During this time I introduced my client to a small local builder who later formed a company with the Russian, to export Canadian goods and provide training to Russian tradesmen.

3. The Russian builder and I maintained telephone contact for a number of months, which led to an invitation to travel to Moscow to train senior members of the Russian builder's company in the fundamentals of wood frame technology. I was now an exporter of technology and a teacher.

4. Further discussions after the first trip led to another visit, this time to meet prospective Russian house customers. A highlight of the visit was a five-day trip to a nearby Republic to meet senior government officials involved in planning and architecture. Back in Moscow, my Canadian associates were quickly establishing a wood-cutting sawmill and a window-door-making plant. My role kept changing, answering the need at any given moment, from teacher, to planner, architect, technologist, and project manager.

5. I left Moscow with two commissions and many more prospects. We exchanged drafts of contracts and negotiated terms of agreements, eventually developing a design-build contract that my client would offer to Russian customers. With this form of agreement I was not required to set up a practice in Russia. All legal and contractual issues were handled by my client.

6. So how would you get a commission in Russia? There are many ways to start:

- participate in humanitarian activities – you volunteer your time and pay expenses to travel there
- join an educational exchange program, or industry trade mission
- become a consultant to a Canadian company already in Russia

- do cold-calling scouting trips, targeting your specialization industry
- get involved in government-sponsored technology transfer programs.

7. Why export architectural services to Russia?

- lucrative contracts at full fees, higher than in Canada
- limited liability
- less competition, especially in the design of buildings using Canadian technology
- huge demand for our talents and experience, while underemployment exists here
- the adventure and glamour of an international practice.

8. Final Note: Patience and flexibility are essential character traits in working abroad; cultural differences and language problems are bound to surface, requiring your best diplomatic skills.

5. From Quotation to Completion of Contract

Quotation

When you are satisfied that the buyer's response to the initial product, prepare a Quotation (Pro-Forma Invoice) based on the expression of interest. Attention to accuracy and detail is critical because the Quotation is the first part of the Contract. If the Quotation is accepted within the stipulated time limit without reservations, it becomes a Binding Contract. It is essential that the final Quotation be clear and unambiguous on all essential points. In addition, the Quotation must contain all necessary legal clauses for your protection. Your legal advisor can help you with these.

Quotation Checklist

- State your standard terms and conditions. Specify that the laws of Canada and your province apply.
- Use the metric system for all weights, measurements and specifications. Virtually the whole world, with the important exception of the United States, trades housing products under the SI (Système Internationale), or metric system.
- State what specifications and standards will be used in the transaction. Where applicable, specify that international standards are to be followed.
- Clearly define what the price means: EX WORKS, FOB factory, CIF, etc. Use the Incoterms (terms of trade) as defined in the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) publication *Incoterms 1990* (see References).
- Clearly state the time limit of the Quotation. Depending on circumstances, it should not be much longer than a week.
- Specify your preferred method of payment: irrevocable letter of credit (L/C) confirmed by your bank, with sight draft (for more on L/Cs, see CMHC's *Documenting Export Financing*).
- Clearly state shipment is "FOB our factory" and subject to availability. Do not mention delivery dates – you have yet to negotiate with your buyer the question of ownership of the goods during shipment and who will be responsible for transport costs and safety of goods in passage. **Note that this Incoterm is used differently in North America: FOB our factory (N. America) = Ex Works (rest of the world).**
- Write "E.O. & E." (Errors, Omissions & Exceptions – assumed corrected, included and noted) at the bottom of the Quotation.

- Clearly define packing and labelling specifications, including language requirements.
- Have your legal advisor draw up and include protection clauses in the Quotation: these will include clause on applicable law in case of dispute (Canada and your province), location of arbitration court in case of dispute, etc.
- Send the Quotation by fax **and by courier**.
- Arrange interim financing, if necessary, through bank, Export Development Corporation, Business Development Bank, CCC, or other financial agency.

Negotiation of Contract

Make sure the Contract corresponds in every detail to the accepted Quotation, including amount and kind of goods to be sold, with exact specifications, packing and labelling instructions, price and payment terms, all required documents including the Import Licence number (your buyer's country) and Revenue Canada Customs and Excise Export Declaration B13, and the date goods are to be shipped. In addition,

- Keep the fax transmittal letter and the hard copy mailed letter.
- Cross-reference the Contract with the Quotation.
- Make shipping and transportation arrangements immediately (if this is your responsibility under the Contract).
- Open a file for each shipment. Contents include: all documents required prior to shipping, the Expression of Interest, the Prequalification Questionnaire, Quotation, Contract, and all subsequent and relevant correspondence.
- The file must also contain the export documents: the Bill of Lading (B/L), Insurance Certificate, Canadian Customs Declarations, Certificate of Origin, Consular Invoices (if required) and the your Commercial Invoice(s).

Performance of Contract

- When you receive your signed and sealed Contract, request an initial deposit by wire transfer, if this is the agreed procedure. At the same time, your buyer will instruct his or her bank to open an irrevocable letter of credit (L/C) in your favour.

- Ensure price, quality, quantity, specifications of shipment. Also ensure packing and labelling meet language and other specifications in the Contract, and coordinate additional (if any, and if this is your contractual responsibility) packing and shipping with the freight forwarders.

- If terms are "FOB Factory," immediately send Bill of Lading, Packing List, Commercial Invoice, and other agreed upon documents to the bank for release of payment against L/C.

- Instruct your bank to issue a Sight Draft against your L/C as per terms of Contract. This ensures that the buyer pays the freight forwarder for stowing of goods in the event of shipping or docking problems causing shipping delays, or demurrage.

Legal Clauses for the Sales Contract

Your lawyer will negotiate the inclusion of the following clauses, as well as others, depending on your particular circumstances, into your Export Sales Contract for your protection.

1. This Agreement shall be governed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the Province of [as applicable] and of Canada.

2. In case of dispute, the parties irrevocably agree to submit the dispute to conciliation and arbitration by the arbitrators appointed in accordance with the Rules of Conciliation and Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce to the exclusion of a Court of Law, except to enforce the Arbitration Award. Said arbitration shall be conducted at the City of [here state: to be agreed beforehand]. Each of the parties agrees to respect a judicial acceptance of the award of the Arbitrators.

3. This Agreement between X in Canada and Y in [foreign country] creates an international agreement that subjects each of X and Y to the obligations of good faith, trust, and confidence which are essential to international dealings, in favour of the other.

This Agreement shall be subject to the United Nations Convention on the International Sale of Goods.

6. Sources of Market Information

Country Overview

Basic Country Information

For basic information like size, population, climate, languages spoken, neighbouring countries, chief ports, air routes, travel facilities, banks, business hours, holidays, customs and practices, currency, weights and measures, electric current used, consult:

1) *Guides for Canadian Exporters*, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) InfoCentre – available for many countries. Call 1-800-267-8376.

2) *Overseas Business Reports*, U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, Washington, D.C. 20230.

3) *The Times Atlas of the World*.

4) *Handbook of International Trade & Development Statistics*, Supplement, UNCTAD, Geneva, Switzerland.

5) For a fee, you can subscribe to receive the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) *Country Profiles*, *Business Profiles*, and *Risk Assessment* publications. These booklets, ranging in size from 20-140 pages, describe the countries, markets and business environment in over 180 countries, and are an invaluable resource for the exporter interested in investing or exporting anywhere in the world. They are updated quarterly, are timely, accurate, but pricey. For subscription information, call 1-212-554-0600 or write The Economist Intelligence Unit, NA, Incorporated, The Economist Building, 111 West 57th Street, New York, NY, 10019, USA. Also available, for a modest fee, on the Internet (see below).

Country Trade Information

For information on tariffs, tariff rates, import policies, customs requirements, product classification, internal taxes, consult:

1) The Geographic Trade Development Divisions at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

2) The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service (DFAIT): In some 125 cities abroad and 13 in Canada, more than 600 trade officers are responsible for helping you expand your export sales abroad. Contact the Canadian Embassy in the country and send the Trade

Commissioner your company brochure, product sheets and information on your marketing effort. Get the directory of the service from the InfoCentre at 1-800-267-8376. Or contact the Service (at DFAIT) online at http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/

3) The Embassy or Consulate of the country in Canada.

4) *The Exporters' Encyclopedia Directory*, P.O. Box 2007, Jersey City, N.J., USA. Telephone: (201) 547-6050 or branches in Canada.

5) On the U.S.A. only: *The U.S. Customs Directory*, 1301 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington D.C. 20229. Telephone (202) 566-8195.

6) *Exporting to the United States*, Department of the Treasury, U.S. Customs Service, Washington D.C. 20229.

Country Economic Performance

For economic indicators, income levels, purchasing power, domestic production of housing and housing products and services, consumption of housing products/services and product usage levels, consult:

1) Statistical yearbook for the country, often available in English.

2) *United Nations Statistical Yearbook*, Annual, U.N., New York, and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics.

3) For a country's economic development plans, which are usually published by their national governments and often available in English and French, call their Embassy or Consulate, or your local central or university library.

Country Distribution System

For information on transportation, shipping costs, routes, sea and surface costs, contact:

Freight forwarders in Canada and in the country, as well as ocean shipping, rail and truck companies.

Country Creditworthiness

For information on export finance, foreign exchange, terms of payment, and country's general creditworthiness, contact:

1) Local bankers, both domestic and foreign (also see The Unknown Buyer).

2) The Export Development Corporation, 151 O'Connor Street, P.O. Box 655, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K3 (also see The Unknown Buyer).

3) The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA): Contact the Director General, Industrial Cooperation Division (CIDA-INC) by telephone at (819) 994-4348, or by fax at (819) 953-5024.

The Local Housing Market

Export Statistics

For Canadian housing exports to the country, exports of your product from Canada, exports of your product from various competitor countries, and the growth of the housing product/services market in the country, consult:

1) The Geographic Trade Development Divisions at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

2) *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics*, United Nations, New York.

3) *United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, United Nations, New York.

4) *Statistics Canada Merchandise Export Annual* – Catalogue No. 65-202.

Also, check out your competitors in the country at these Internet sites:
gopher://talon.statcan.ca 70
ftp://talon.statcan.ca/pub(login 'anonymous')
http://www.statcan.ca

Local Housing Standards and Specifications

Standards Council of Canada, Ottawa: Technical standards differ from country to country, as do the requirements for demonstrating compliance with them. The Council helps exporters learn about the local housing and housing product standards, regulations and the process of conforming to local assessment procedures. The Council also operates a Sales Division where foreign and international housing codes and product standards can be purchased. Call 1-800-267-8220 or (613) 238-3222.

Housing Market Prices

1) Monthly commodity price bulletin, UNCTAD/GATT, Geneva, Switzerland.

2) *Commodity Trade & Price Trends*, Annual, World Bank, published by Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland USA.

3) *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics*, United Nations, New York.

4) *International Financial Statistics* – International Monetary Fund, Washington, D.C.

5) *Handbook of International Trade & Development Statistics*, Supplement, UNCTAD, Geneva, Switzerland.

The Unknown Buyer

1) **The Canadian Trade Commissioner in the Country:** He or she may well have heard about your buyer. The Trade Commissioner Service comprises over 600 trade officers in 125 cities abroad. It provides its services free of charge. The Directory of the TC Service is available from DFAIT at 1-800-267-8376, or you can access them through the DFAIT Internet site at:

   http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca

2) **Your Bank:** Ask for bank references on your Screening Questionnaire when you first receive unknown buyer's order. Check them out with your bank. Banks have to be discreet, so learn to read between the lines. It is good practice to request bank references for the same firm regularly and to watch for any changes in the information. The banks' services are free.

3) **The Export Development Corporation:** An excellent source for buyer screening, if you are dealing with a non-OECD country, although it will not provide confidential information on the buyer to the exporter. In Ottawa, call (613) 598-2500 or check White Pages under Export Development Corporation.

4) **Trade References:** Ask for references on your Screening Questionnaire. Trade references speak the language of business, so feel free to ask pointed questions when you contact them.

5) **Canadian Ethnocultural Business Groups** or chambers of commerce related to the unknown country: they could very well know your buyer. Heritage Canada publishes *Multiculturalism Means Business*, a directory of such groups (see Annotated Bibliography).

6) **Foreign Business Agents:** If you know one or more, listen to them for other references and/or for context for the information you receive from other sources.

7) **Your Legal Advisor:** Consult an experienced international lawyer. If you decide to proceed with the export deal, have your counsel check all forms, documents, quotations, orders, etc. before you send them to the buyer. In particular, your lawyer should vet your sales contract to make sure clauses to protect you against all eventualities. (See Chapter 6 for some typical clauses.)

8) **Dun & Bradstreet Canada** will, for a fee, investigate a foreign firm and submit a credit report. *Most successful Canadian exporters use this service.* For preliminary information, D&B publishes Regional Business Directories. In addition, it publishes specific guides dealing with exportation: Exporter's Encyclopedia, Export Guides to Germany, Israel, Japan, Mexico, the US, etc. Call them at 1-800-463-6362, write them at 5770 Hurontario Street, Mississauga ON L5R 3G5, or access their Website at:

http://www.dbisna.com

Other Sources

1) **The Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada (AMEC):** AMEC is a national, private, non-profit organization. It has current data on all trade related issues. The AMEC publishes regular newsletters on international trade, has an extensive lending library, and maintains regular contacts with foreign buyers and agents. It is also a source for information on federal and provincial export programs, trading houses and export related services. Located in Ottawa: (613) 238-8888.

2) **The Canadian Manufactured Housing Association:** Ottawa: (613) 563-3520.

3) **Manufactured Housing Association of Canada:** Promotes national and international trade. Thornhill, ON: (905) 225-6950.

4) **The Bilateral Trade Association:** Links Canadian business people with their counterparts in specific countries. Contact the geographic trade development divisions of DFAIT: 1-800-267-8376.

5) **The Chamber of Commerce in the country** where you wish to trade will supply useful addresses and will also publish a notice of your interest in its journal. There are about 3,400 chambers in the world, 2,000 of them in the United States.

6. **Freight Forwarders and Insurance Companies** can furnish addresses of agents, distributors and importers. They may also have credit experience with your buyer.

7) **The Commercial Attaches of Embassies** are good sources for invitations for public tender. Look for Embassies in White Pages.

7. Free or Low-Cost Internet Sources

Canadian Sites – Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Provides export counselling, market intelligence and marketing assistance. InfoEx is a toll-free service which provides information on export-related government programs and services at 1-800-267-8376, or access the main Website at:

http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca

For US trade, call the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. at:

http://www.cdnemb-washdc.org/

Industry Canada

The Industry Canada main Internet site is at:

http://info.ic.gc.ca

Strategis offers three particularly useful databases, among others: Markets, Trade and Investment, which provides international trade statistics; Industrial Perspectives, which covers Canadian industry: currently (September 1996) it holds only a small percentage of Canada's housing companies (response to keywords "housing" and "builders"), but when complete, will be able to generate a comprehensive profile of the Canadian housing industry; and Micro-Economic Research and Analysis, an analysis tool for the above and other databases. Access Strategis at:

http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/

National Research Council of Canada

Access the NRC's Canadian Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI) for technical information on the foreign market (some charges apply) at:

http://www.cisti.nrc.ca/cisti/cisti.html

Natural Resources Canada

Information on the buyer's country, links to other locations, including the International Standards Organization, the United Nations information services, International Fax gateway (send a fax from Mosaic), Internet Patent Search System (from STO), and various U.S. government sites, at:

http://www.emr.ca

Revenue Canada
Answers questions on Canada Customs regulations, at:

gopher://gopher.revcan.ca.

Statistics Canada
See whether your competitors are trading with the country at:

gopher://talon.statcan.ca:70
ftp://talon.statcan.ca/pub (password:guest)
http://www.statcan.ca

Canadian Sites – Non-Government

University of Victoria
A well-organized master list of Internet economic links and references to most of the economic resources. Access this site at:

http://sol.uvic.ca/1/econ/depts.html

Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters Canada
http://www.palantir.ca/the-alliance

International Sites – General

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)
http://www.i-trade.com/infosrc/eiu

Dun & Bradstreet Canada
http://www.dbisna.com

Transparency International
http://www.transparency.de

International Chamber of Commerce
http://www1.usa1.com/~ibnet/icchp.html

The United Nations

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Extensive menus of country market information at:

gopher://unicc.org:70/11/UNCTAD

World Trade Organization

Trade trends and stats (1994), by region and country, at:

http://www.unicc.org/wto/int_trade_wpf.html

The World Bank

A variety of country economic and sector reports and other information on World Bank publications from its Public Information Centre at:

http://www.worldbank.org/html/PIC.html

International Sites – By Geographic Region

The United States

National Trade Data Bank

This Department of Commerce database contains basic country market research reports and the *CIA World Fact Book* (profiles of all countries in the world), and lists of contacts, from an American perspective. Available in CD-ROM (for a fee) or on the Internet at:

http://www.stat-usa.gov/BEN/Services/ntdbhome.hmtl
http://www.stat-usa.gov/stat-usa.hmtl
http://www.odei.gov/cia/publications/95fact (CIA Factbook 1995)

Overseas Business Reports

This International Trade Administration service offers full-text reports on the economies of most countries at:

http://www.ita.doc.gov/

International Macro-Economic Tables (by Country)

This site offers the Penn World Table, a very comprehnesive set of international comparisons (1950-1992), from *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, at:

gopher://nber.harvard.edu:70/11/.pwt56

Africa and the Middle East

Information Bank on African Development Studies, at the World Bank

Contact for information on African countries and economies, by e-mail at:

mali2@worldbank.org

Asia and the Pacific Rim

Country Home Pages

These will not give you hard information, but may be worth scanning. Look for names of companies and market statistics, at:

Australia http://life.anu.edu.au/links/ozweb.html

China http://www.ihep.ac.cn/china_www.html
Hong Kong http://www.hk.super.net/~rlowe/bizhk/bhhome.html
Taiwan http://www.roc.com/

Asian Development Bank (ABD)

Business opportunities (subscribers only), country and company information at:

http://www.asiandevbank.org

Business News – Singapore

Business information for exporters at:

http://sunsite.nus.sg/SEAlinks/singapore-info.html
gopher://gopher.cic.net/11
http://www.abn.com.sg (Asia Business News)

Hong Kong Business Directory

Lists some 125,000 businesses in Hong Kong and links to other sites in Asia at:

http://www.hkdir.com.hk

Japan Business

For information on the Japanese business environment and economics, e-mail at:

listserv@pucc.princeton.edu (subscribe 'Japan')

Japan Information Guide

Market information in the Stanford U page, at:

http://fuji.stanford.edu/XGUIDE
http://www.ntt.jp

Europe

The European Union home page
http://s700.uminho.pt:80/ec.html

Université Libre de Bruxelles (Free University of Brussels)
http://www.ulb.ac.be/

Nijenrode University
In-depth coverage of business, finance, economics and banking and international and business law; also countries and companies information, Central and Eastern Europe, etc., at:

http://www.nijenrode.nl/

ECONsult
Forecasts of East European economies at:

http://www.internex.net/

Reesweb Internet Resources
Full guide on Internet resources on companies and countries/economies of former Soviet Union/Central and Eastern Europe, at:

http://crichton.nis.pitt.edu/~cjp/rsecon.html

Latin America and the Caribbean

The Caribbean
CARICOM, a trading association of the Caribbean countries, has undertaken a project to improve access to trade information about the region. Access the CARICOM Export Development Project (after you register) through their fax-back system at (809) 436-2820. In addition, for online databases, call (809) 436-0578.

Latin America and Caribbean Network
Information from governments and institutions at:

gopher://mia.lac.net

The University of Texas
Information on Latin American business at:

telnet://utcat.utexas.edu

How to Use Internet Sources for Your Screening Search

The following sites were located by a search for the keyword "export" on the Yahoo search engine over the course of an hour and are provided here as an example of the type of information you can find, quickly, on the Internet. You can do a search like this yourself. Use key words like the name of the country, the company, and the databases listed in this chapter to find out more about your unknown buyer. There are many other search engines and locations.

International Chamber of Commerce
http://www.ICC-IBCC.org

Dun & Bradstreet International
http://www.dbisna.com

DFAIT
Exporting information plus links to other trade-related sites at:

http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/

Royal Bank of Canada
Excellent resource on financing, creditworthiness, country profiles, and links to other trade-related sites at:

http://www.royalbank.com

Taiwan Imports/Exports
Company and product locator at:

http://www.roc.com/impexp/ Also, Republic of China (Taiwan) on-line at http://roc.com

Dept of Export Promotion of Thailand
Trade fairs and exporter selected lists by department at:

http://www.nectec.or.th/bureaux/dep/

Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)
Promotes international investment and exporting to Japan, provides the latest information on government procurement, as well as the economy and business at:

http://www.jetro.go.jp/

Directory of US/Canada International experts (US Trade Centre Directory)
http://www.grasmick.com/ustrade.htm

KEYMEX – The KEY to MEXican exports
Source for what is required, how long it will take, how much it will cost – for Mexico's safety approvals (Net Connection Corp. – selling products in Mexico) at:

http://jsasoc.com/keymexx.html

South Australian Regional Economic Development Boards
Investment and export opportunities, regional profiles and stats and local government information at:

http://www.wombat.com.au/wombat/showcase/eda/sa

Export directory of Denmark
http://www.krak.dk/

Export Directory
The most comprehensive source of US export information at:

http://maingate.net/us-exports.html

RICE
International business club whose goal is to develop new business between French and foreign companies at:

http://www.cci.oise.fr/rice/index.html

8. Commercial Internet Sources

Many electronic databases useful for screening purposes are available only through commercial vendors. These companies make licensing arrangements with the database owners to market and distribute the electronic materials, paying the originators a royalty. Commercial vendors provide you with a large number and selection of electronic databases, for a fee. Often the material overlaps, so that the service you select becomes a matter of personal choice.

Charges for access to databases through commercial vendors can include telecommunications (or long-distance telephone) charges, connect time (time actually spent working in the database) and charges for capturing (printing, displaying or downloading) the results of searches. It is worthwhile to shop around. Some databases are offered by more than one provider and there can be great variations in the costs. If there is a database that is particularly useful, investigate bypassing the electronic vendor and going directly to the source.

For example Dun & Bradstreet, one of the better-known sources of business and credit information, is available online through Dialog as one of the several hundred databases. instead, it may be cheaper to subscribe directly to Dun & Bradstreet.

The following list of databases is divided by country or region. Some are specific to one particular industry such as telecommunications or transportation. Contact numbers, either by telephone or online, are provided in the table or appear before it.

Commercial Vendor Contact Numbers

Company	Telephone	E-mail or Internet site
1) America Online	(800) 827-6364	
2) BRS (CD Plus)	(800) 955-0906	staff@cdpluscom
3) CompuServe	(800) 848-8199	
4) DataStar (via Dialog)	(800) 334-2564	telnet://dialog.com
5) Delphi Internet Services Corp.	(800) 544-4005 (U.S.) (800) 387-2689 (Canada)	info@delphi.com
6) Dialog Information Services	(800) 334-2564	telnet://dialog.com

Company	Telephone	E-mail or Internet site
7) Dow Jones News Retrieval (via Mead Data)	(800) 227-4908 (513) 859-5398	telnet://nex.meaddata.com http://www.meaddata.com petern@MEADDATA.COM
8) Dun & Bradstreet	(800) 232-1026 (U.S.) (203) 762-2511 (800) 463-6362 (Canada)	 http://www.dbisna.com
9) GEnie Information Services	(800) 638-9636	
10) InfoGlobe (has a gateway to Dow Jones)	(416) 585-5250 and QuickLaw)	
11) Infomart Dialog Limited	(800) 668-9215 (416) 442-2198	
12) Lexis-Nexis (via Mead Data)	(800) 227-4908 (513) 859-5398	telnet://nex.meaddata.com http://www.meaddata.com
13) NewsNet Inc.	(800) 345-1301 (215) 527-8030	
14) Orbit-Questel, Inc.	(800) 456-4274 (800) 995-0906	telnet://orbit.com
15) QL (QuickLaw) Systems Ltd.	(800) 387-0899	

Commercial Databases by Geographic Region

United States		
Name of Database	Contents	Major Provider(s)
D&B Electronic Business Directory and Market Identifiers	Directory files of biographic information on companies in the U.S.	Dialog Dun & Bradstreet
Directory of U.S. Importers and Exporters	Company profiles of the U.S. companies that are involved in international trade.	Dialog
Management Contents	Provides current information on a variety of business- and management-related topics for assistance in decision-making and forecasting. Information taken from primarily U.S. publications, with some international input.	Dialog
PAPERS	Provides access to business and economics information publications in newspapers throughout the U.S.	Dialog
U.S. legal databases	Contains information provided by WESTLAW on American federal regulations, selected state regulations, Internal Revenue Service, news releases, etc.	QL Systems (represents WESTLAW in Canada)
U.S. Court of International Trade Decisions	Gives information on decisions from U.S. Court of International Trade and U.S. Customs Court.	WESTLAW (612) 228-2500
U.S. ITC Report	Covers decisions from the U.S International Trade Commission affecting the import of foreign products.	NewsNet

North America		
Name of Database	Contents	Major Provider(s)
ABI/Inform	Comprehensive database which contains abstracts from more than 1,000 publications useful to exporters.	Dialog (US) Infomart Dialog (Can) InfoGlobe (800) 268-9128 (416) 585-5250
Business Dataline	Full-text articles from regional business publications in the U.S. and Canada.	Dialog (US) Infomart Dialog (Can)
MarketScan Plus	Comprehensive historical financial instrument databases for securities and financial instruments traded on every major North American stock exchange.	InfoGlobe (800) 268-9128 (416) 585-5250
Source:Mex	Covers the economic conditions in Mexico, including foreign investment, foreign trade and foreign debt.	NewsNet

International		
Name of Database	Contents	Major Provider(s)
D&B International Dun's Market Identifers	Offers information on between 2 and 3 million non-U.S. companies.	Dialog Dun & Bradstreet
Business International	Provides business information from some 60 countries: focuses on economic and political trends, market analyses and corporate strategies.	Dialog
Business Wire	About 90% of the articles from this database are business-related. Covers full-text news releases from more than 10,000 news sources.	Dialog

International (continued)		
Company Library (COMPNY)	Provides financial and business information on thousands of companies world-wide.	Mead Data Central
Fairbase	Comprehensive listing of upcoming trade fairs, exhibitions and conferences all over the world.	BRS
Findex	Identifies and describes industry and market research reports and studies world-wide.	Dialog
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade	QL Systems
Infomat International Business	Contains abstracts from 6,000 business publications world-wide.	Dialog
International Information Report	Provides leads and contact information for reports, databases and hot-lines world-wide.	NewsNet
Investext	Full-text reports on some 4,000 companies, both in the U.S. and throughout the world.	Dialog (U.S.) Infomart Dialog (Can) NewsNet
Moody's Corporate News (International)	Comprehensive coverage of business and financial information world-wide.	Dialog
PAIS International	Covers literature of business and social sciences, giving international coverage on economics, business, government activities and international relations.	BRS Dialog
PTS - International Forecasts, F&S Index, Prompt, New Product Announcements and Newsletter Database	Series of databases which provide international coverage on a variety of business subjects using a variety of source materials.	BRS Dialog

International (continued)		
Tenders Electronic Daily		Infomart Dialog (Can)
Trade and Industry ASAP and Index	Indexes and abstracts articles from some 2,000 publications of a business nature. Index provides citations to world-wide business, trade and industry literature.	Dialog
Tradstat World Trade Statistics Database	Provides detailed monthly trade figures on over 60,000 products for some 25 countries world-wide. Trade figures are currently reported from Europe, the U.S., Canada, South America and the Far East.	Tradstat 011-44-71-930-2581
Wilson Business Periodicals Index	Indexes information from about 350 of the leading business periodicals in the English language world-wide.	BRS

Africa and the Middle East		
Name of Database	Contents	Major Provider(s)
Africa News Services	Covers African political, economic and cultural development.	NewsNet
Middle East/Africa Library	Contains information on all countries in Africa and the Middle East. Sources include trade and business journals, company reports and business opportunities.	Mead Data Central
Middle East Business Intelligence	Features government tenders and early reports on business opportunities.	NewsNet

Asia and the Pacific Rim		
Name of Database	Contents	Major Provider(s)
Asia-Pacific	Covers businesses, economics and new industries in Pacific Rim nations.	Dialog
Asia/Pacific Rim Library	Provides information gathered from newspapers, trade journals and company reports on business news, financial analysis and trade.	Mead Data Central
Asian Economic News	Reports on trade, debts and loans from major players in the Far East.	NewsNet
East Asia Express and East Asia Express Contracts	Contains information for western businesses looking for opportunities in East Asia, including business opportunities and ventures.	NewsNet
East Asian Business Intelligence	Covers government tenders and early reports on current and future business opportunities.	NewsNet
Japan Technology	Comprehensive information sources of the latest developments in Japanese research, technology and business.	Orbit
Kompass Asia/Pacific	A directory file providing business information for some 200,000 companies in the Pacific Rim.	Dialog

Europe		
Name of Database	Contents	Major Provider(s)
D&B European Dun's Market Identifers	Presents detailed information on about 2 million business located in Europe.	Dialog Dun & Bradstreet
Comtext (EEC Trade)	Contains detailed external trade statistics for European Union and its trade partners.	WEFA Group (215) 667-6000
Delphes European Business	A French database providing information on international markets, products, industries and companies from the European perspective.	Dialog
Europe Library (EUROPE)	Provides detailed information on all countries in Europe, including Eastern and Central Europe. Sources of information include trade and business journals, company reports, etc.	Mead Data Central
Extel International Financial Cards and News Cards	Provides news and basic company information on British and other international companies.	Dialog
ICC British Company Directory	Comprehensive source for companies operating in Great Britain.	Dialog

Europe (including Eastern Europe and Russia)		
Name of Database	Contents	Major Provider(s)
ICC International Business Research	Provides comprehensive analyses on British and European companies.	Dialog
Kompass Europe and Kompass U.K.	Directory files providing business information for companies in Europe and in the United Kingdom.	Dialog
U.K. Importers	Contains basic biographic information on British importers of specific products.	DataStar
USSR Business	Tracks changes in former USSR and alerts users to opportunities in all republics. Contains basic biographic information on companies listed.	NewsNet

Latin America and the Caribbean		
Name of Database	Contents	Major Provider(s)
Chronicle of Latin America Economic Affairs	Source of current information on economic and business developments in the region.	NewsNet
Info-South	Contains citations and abstracts from publications in Latin America covering economic, political and social issues.	Dialog University of Miami (305) 284-6868
North South America Library (NSAMER)	Contains detailed information on all countries in South America, as well as Central America, Canada and the U.S.	Mead Data Central

9. Export Training and Courses

1. The Forum for International Trade Training (FITT) is a national training initiative intended to assist Canadian businesses to become more effective in the global marketplace, increase awareness of export opportunities and establish professional training standards in international business. FITT is spearheaded by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and is being developed with input from Canadian business and trade organizations. The programs available or being developed include FITTskills – an intensive program designed to enhance the international trade skills of individuals, entrepreneurs and professionals. It consists of eight 45 minute to 1-hour modules:

   Global Entrepreneurship
   International Finance
   International Physical Distribution
   Legal Aspects of International Trade
   International Marketing
   International Trade Logistics
   International Trade Research
   International Trade Management

2. TradeFITT is currently being developed to provide managers and operational staff with the hands-on practical skills needed to effectively conduct business in international markets, assess the capabilities of their organization, and successfully develop international business plans and priorities. TradeFITT offers eight courses. Each course will be eight hours in length:

   The Global Marketplace: Who Can Help
   Choosing a Market
   Partnering a Deal
   Financing Trade
   Marketing Sales
   Distribution
   Documentation and Shipping
   Export Readiness – Assessment Tools

3. GeoFITT and SectorFITT focus on the skills and knowledge necessary to conduct business in specific geographical areas or sectors.

4. There are also training programs offered locally, like the one offered in British Columbia by The Export Counselling and Training Branch of the BC Trade Development Corporation, which provides advice to companies contemplating exporting for the first time. It also provides services to companies that are already exporting but need professional assistance. For more information, call the BC Trade Development Corp., Vancouver, BC. (604) 844-1900; 1-800-972-2255.

10. References

Antaki, Nabil N. 1994. La filière du contrat international. Les Publications du Quebec, Quebec. ISBN: 2-551-16161-4. 81 pages. Price: $14.95, from the Quebec ministère des Affaires internationales. In French. The best short guide of its type on the ins and outs of international contracts. Read sections on how to negotiate an international contract, documentary credit operations, and litigation and arbitration.

Bottin International. A French directory published in several languages, including English, listing agents, importers, chambers of commerce and customs brokers.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. September 1995. *Directory of Sources of Support for Canada's Housing Exporters.* 42 pages. Summary of federal, provincial and other Canadian programs and services to support Canadian housing exporters, published by CMHC's International Relations Division.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Undated, companion volume to above. *National Strategic Framework for Canada's Housing Exporters: Report of the Federal Housing Export Strategies Task Force.* 14 pages. Key federal government strategy document published by Task Force with membership from CMHC, Industry Canada, DFAIT, Natural Resources Canada and the National Research Council.

Commerce Weekly. Published in Washington, DC, by the the U.S. Department of Commerce. It contains many overseas enquiries.

Curran, Anne and Gerhard Kautz. Third Edition, August 1994. *Exporting from Canada: A practical guide to finding and developing export markets for your product or service.* Self-Counsel Press, A division of International Self-Counsel Press Ltd. Canada & United States. ISBN 0-88908-786-5. 120 pages. Price: $23.00. See Chapter 2, Doing Your Homework and Chapter 7, The Export Sales Contract and Documentation.

External Affairs and International Trade Canada. Sixth Edition, Spring 1993. *Export Guide: A Practical Approach.* 46 pages. Available from the DFAIT InfoCentre at 1-800-267-8376. Text by Geoff Nimmo and Michael MacDonald of the Canadian Exporters' Association. Good short overview of exporting.

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. *CanadExport.* 8-12 pages. Newsletter on Canadian exporters and exporting issued every two weeks by DFAIT. Available from the InfoCentre at 1-800-267-8376.

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. 1995. *Directory of the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service.* Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, Trade Communications Division (BCT) and InfoCentre Data Base (8XA). 61 pages. Available at the nearest International Trade Centre (at least one in each province).

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. 1996. *Overview: Canada's International Business Strategy 1996-1997.* Minister of Supply and Services Canada. ISBN: 0-662-24060-X. 49 pages. Available at the nearest International Trade Centre (at least one in each province).

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. 1996. *The Exporter's Guide.* Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. ISBN: 0-662-24385-4. 66 pages. Available at the nearest International Trade Centre (at least one in each province).

Gordon, John S. 1993. *Profitable Exporting: A Complete Guide to Marketing Your Products Abroad.* Second Edition. John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 0-471-57514-3. 388 pages. Price: $120.00 Written for an American readership, nevertheless comprehensive and thorough. See especially Part One, Organize for Export, pp. 1-49.

Heritage Canada. 1993. *Multiculturalism Means Business: A Directory of Business Contacts.* 88 pages. Includes ethno-Canadian business organizations with connections to many countries. Organized by province, there are also sections on ethnic media and ethno-cultural directories. Available at libraries.

Industry, Science and Technology Canada. November 1992. *Exporting for Competitiveness: Ten Steps for Small Business/Report on Small Business in Canada 1992.* Entrepreneurship and Small Business Office, ISTC/Minister of Supply and Services Canada. ISBN: 0-662-20096-9. 89 pages. Exporter's guide covering the major topics. See especially Step 2, Select and Research Target Foreign Markets. Includes many self-assessment checklists.

International Chamber of Commerce. Numerous publications on the export process, fraud, corruption, specific countries, marine insurance fraud, etc. For a list of publications, and other useful information, contact Mrs. Barbara Fisher, Publications & Finance, Canadian Council for International Business (CCIB), 1160-55 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, ON K1P 6N4. Tel.: (613) 238-4000; Fax: (613) 238-7643.

International Yellow Pages. Lists people who have paid to be brought to the attention of those interested in international trade.